

Jewish art enters golden age

By DIANE KAYE LAW

"We are in the beginning of the golden age of Jewish visual arts and painting," art expert Lawrence A. Fleischman told his audience Sunday night, Feb. 22, in Shaurry Zedek's synagogue in Southfield. Fleischman, director of the Kennedy Gallery in New York and a former member of the Shaurry Zedek congregation, presented a slide-illustrated lecture on "Jewish Art in America," which highlighted the congregation's celebration of "The Bicentennial and the Jewish Experience."

The three-day bicentennial event was sponsored by the Shaurry Zedek cultural commission's fine arts division.

IN HIS PRESENTATION, Fleischman used the works of prominent Jewish artists such as Meyer Mayers, Ben Shahn, Leon and Baskin and Jack Levine to illustrate his belief that subject matter rather than style distinguishes Jewish art from other types.

"Jewish artists draw from their cultural heritage in their works," he explained. They explore the Old Testament, their environment and show their concern with man's injustice to man. "It is interesting how many Jewish artists were studied to be rabbis."

Religion and background influence art "more than most people realize," according to Fleischman.

"EVERY TIME I see an artist break with his traditional background, but art comes superficial," he added.

Fleischman's credentials as an art expert and collector are impressive. His interest in art began early. As a child, he was fascinated by photography. "From photography, my interest in art developed and constantly grew," he recalled.

AT 11, he began collecting art, acquiring Picasso and Matisse lithographs. In the late 1940s, he became the leading collector of American art. His knowledge of American art afforded him an opportunity to tour his collection and lecture over was on behalf of the United States government.

As a member of the White House Committee for the Fine Arts under Mrs. John

F. Kennedy, he was involved in the selection of paintings for Mrs. Kennedy's project of restoring the White House. He continued to work on the White House committee during the Johnson administration.

WHILE SERVING on the board of directors of the Detroit Institute of Arts (1982-85), Fleischman assisted the institute in procuring its first Rubens and supervised the building of the institute's south wing. Frustrated by a lack of information available on American artists, Fleischman and art institute director Edgar P. Richardson founded the Archives of American

Art. The archives now house more than 1,000,000 reference items on the history of American paintings and sculptures. President of the archives for 14 years, Fleischman was also president of Detroit Arts Commission and chairman of the Art School Society of Arts and Crafts (now Center for Creative Studies) in Detroit.

In 1980, HE became a partner in the Kennedy Galleries in New York. This decision to be a full-time art dealer forced Fleischman to sell his American masters collection, feeling that it wasn't fair to compete with his customers. He now concentrates on collecting antiques and old European masters.

Summing up his work as a professional art dealer, he said: "My greatest thrill now comes from finding great American works and placing them."

Following Fleischman's lecture, guests gathered in Shaurry Zedek's Morris Adler Hall for a reception in his honor.

THE BICENTENNIAL and the Jewish Experience featured a display of Jewish

history in America from 1776-1976. Also on exhibit and available for purchase were paintings and sculptures by prominent Jewish artists. The haunting faces of Jack Levine's lithographs, Hansel Shahn's flowing bronze sculptures and Yasser Agam's agnograms were among the most popular works on display.

The paintings and sculptures in the exhibit were provided by the I. Irving Feldman Gallery of Southfield.

Shaurry Zedek's bicentennial program was organized by Mrs. Peter A. Martin and Mrs. Irwin Deutsch. Mrs. Louis Rada, Mrs. Charlotte Shapiro, I. Irving Feldman, Myron L. Milgrom and Mrs. Walter Field.



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Though it may be difficult to see, there are more than 14,000 printed characters making up this computer portrait of Gerry Matarka.

Computer portraits are here

By GARY FRIEDMAN

There are few businesses that offer a customer a free demonstration of their product with no obligation to purchase that product. However, Computer Portraits Co. a new idea in computer photography does just that.

A computer portrait is a portrait of a person composed of a combination of 16 typewritten characters on a piece of paper. Actually, the process is much more involved, but what the viewer sees is a striking resemblance of himself.

This new art form was brought to the Detroit area by former Southfield resident Jim Dawson just four weeks ago. Ted's restaurant in Bloomfield Hills served as the first place where Dawson brought in a video camera, computer, and line printer equipment that costs thousands of dollars. This past week another was set up at Tel-12 Mall. Dawson hired a close friend, Gerry Matarka, to be his operations manager. As Matarka has had past experience in the computer field.

More precisely, the whole concept works on the same principle as that of a photographic negative. The subject sits in front of a video camera in a small studio setting. The camera makes an exposure that is instantly transmitted into a computer. The computer's job is to analyze the light shades and then to give instructions to a line printer. Using 14,000 printed characters, a portrait of the person is completed in 56 seconds.

There are only seven machines of this type in operation in the country, and Dawson owns two of them.

People who have their portraits made by one of Dawson's computers are under no obligation to purchase it, because the concept is a new one. Matarka says he also says that they hope to do wedding and Bar Mitzvah portraits in the near future.

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